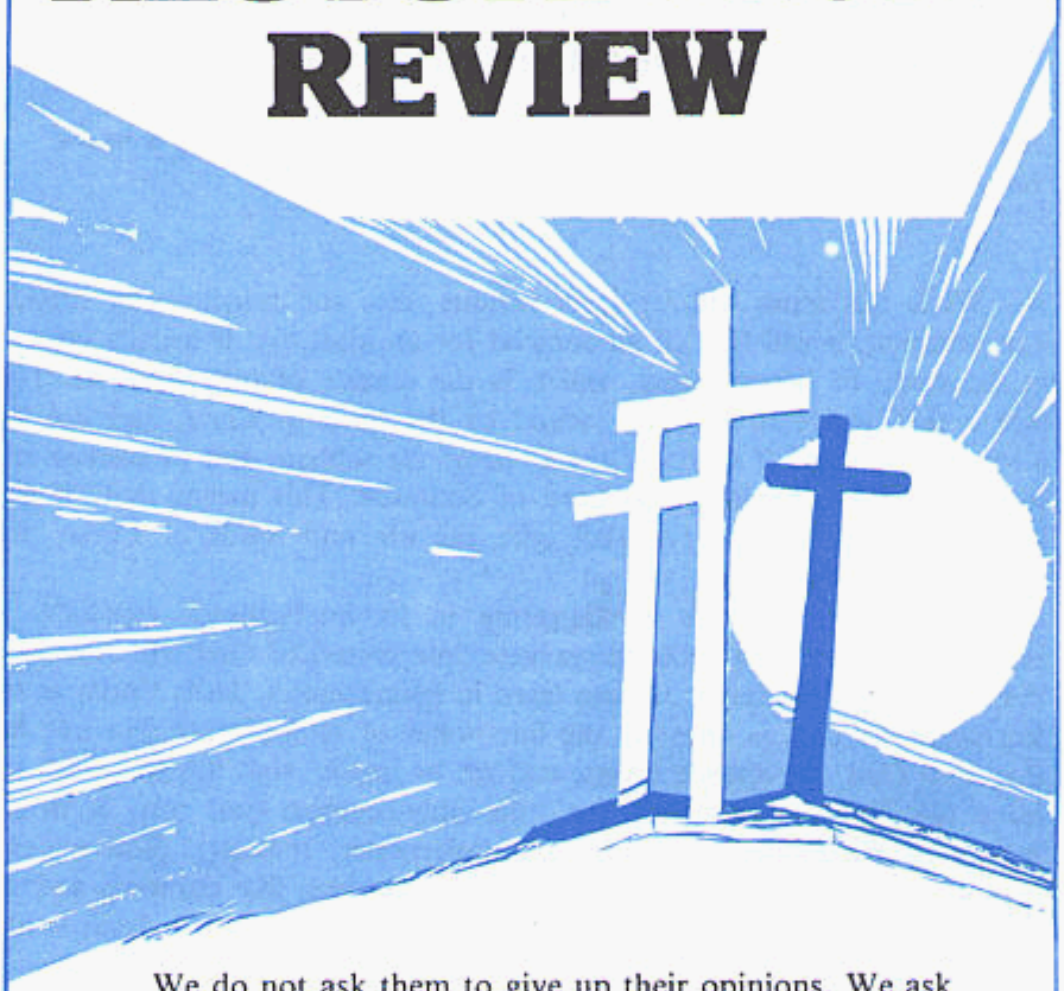
RESTORATION REVIEW



We do not ask them to give up their opinions. We ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinions; but let them hold them as private property.

—*Alexander Campbell*

In This Issue:

Must We Give Up Our Opinions for the Sake of Unity?

Volume 29, No. 1 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **January, 1987**

Volume 29, No. 1 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **January 1987**

The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation . . .

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE: THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him. --Jn. 1:18

While this series will set forth various rules and principles of Biblical interpretation, it will first of all contend for an ideal that is usually ignored in the study of hermeneutics, which is the science of interpretation. This rule is that Scripture must be judged by the spirit of Christ and not the other way around. If Christ is the Lord of the sabbath and of heaven and earth, then he is certainly the Lord of Scripture. This means that if any interpretation is in basic conflict with the life and ideals of Christ that interpretation is suspect.

The above Scripture is staggering in its implications, especially in reference to the Christ being the exegete (interpreter) of God. Here we have the most important lesson we can learn in hermeneutics. Jesus Christ as the interpreter of God is certainly the interpreter of all Scripture. No one has ever seen God, the apostle insists, and yet he implies that this fact does not leave the Father unrevealed, for "the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father" is his exegete (interpreter, revealer). How exciting that is! We can look into the life of a human being like ourselves and see what God is like! Jesus is God's exegete. And so, I conclude, Jesus is also the exegete of Scripture.

This does not mean, of course, that Jesus tells us what every passage means, but it does mean that every passage is to be seen in reference to Christ. Jesus is not to be warped and twisted so as to fit our doctrinal system. Neither can we wrench from the Bible a spirit of intolerance, self-righteousness, and insensitivity, which are often cloaked as "sound doctrine," when these are so contrary to the spirit of the loving, compassionate, forgiving Christ.

This means that there are some things in the Bible that we will consider flawed since they do not measure up to our one sure standard of evaluation, the spirit of Christ. Take these lines from Jer. 18 where the prophet makes a vitriolic response to those who have "dug a pit for my life":

> Therefore deliver up their children to famine;
> give them over to the power of the sword,
> let their wives become childless and widowed.
> May their men meet death by pestilence,

their youths slain by the sword in battle.
May a cry be heard from their houses,
when thou bringest the marauder suddenly upon them!

Must we find some way to approve of the prophet's desire that God should cause the children of his enemies to starve and be put to the sword? Here is a man of God pleading that women be tortured and widowed, that their youth be slain with the sword, that they be struck by pestilence, and that the cry of pain and distress be heard from their homes.

As I read such things as this in the Bible I am to remember that there was One whose enemies "dug a pit for his life," but "when he was reviled reviled not again." And while Jeremiah went on to pray to God, "Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from thy sight" (verse 23), there was one to come who would pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Some commentators have sought to delete these words from Jeremiah, while others try to soften his words by one device or another. Why can't we just admit that the prophet is in this instance wrong, not only by the standard of Christ himself, which he could not yet know, but by the deeper insights of the Old Testament itself, such as Is. 53:7, where the suffering servant is described as one "who was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Jeremiah was oppressed and afflicted but he did open his mouth, and he screamed out curses upon his oppressors. And so, as responsible interpreters of Scripture, we conclude that in this case a prophet of God does not measure up to the loftiest of attitudes in Scripture toward one's enemies, a weakness which is not all that unusual for men of God. What we see here is the grace of God. God knew what was in Jeremiah, took him as he was, warts and all, and used him as a prophet for many troubled years. If it were not for such grace on God's part in using sinful human beings, there would be no place in his service for any of us.

In the same book of Jeremiah we find such God-glorifying words as these: "God has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion" (Jer. 10:12). And the prophet knew how to speak words of hope: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law in their minds, and write it upon their hearts; and I shall be their God and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:33), and he goes on to speak of God's forgiveness: "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Here we see something important about the nature of Scripture: *some passages in the Bible are far more significant than other passages*. Scriptures can be equally true without being equally important. And some things in the Bible are far more relevant to our lives and more helpful in our spiritual pilgrimage than other things. It does not edify us to hear a

prophet rave and rant against his enemies, asking God to remember their sins and curse their children, but we are lifted up when he speaks of God's glory and points to the hope of forgiveness.

Sometimes even in the same chapter there is both a pearl of great truth and a vitriolic outburst, such as in Ps. 137 where we have such majestic language as only captive people could utter, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion," and yet that great psalm is marred by such a hateful line as, "Happy shall he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock." Can you imagine a situation, even in Communist Russia or Nazi Germany, where you would bless the person who would dash innocent babies against the rocks?

And where in all the Bible is there such glorious poetry and sublime truth as these lines from Ps. 139:

> Where can I go from Your Spirit?
> Or where can I flee from Your presence?
> If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
> If I make my bed in hell, behold you are there.
> If I take the wings of the morning,
> And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
> Even there Your hand shall lead me,
> And Your right hand shall hold me.
> And yet the same psalm has these words:
> Do not I hate them, O Lord, who hate You?
> And do not I loathe those who rise up against you?
> I hate them with a perfect hatred;
> I count them my enemies.

If you took an unbeliever to church with you, which of those passages would you want him to hear in the public readings? Can we not say that God, yea the spirit of Christ, speaks to us through one but not through the other? This illustrates how all the Bible is Scripture but not all Scripture is the word of God. I dare say that you will find much in the speeches of Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz in the book of Job that could not be the word of God, and there are five chapters in that book, the speeches of Elihu (chap. 32-37) that are so "human" that many scholars consider them later additions. And yet overall there is much in the book of Job that is the word of God to us. This means that while all of Job is Scripture it is not all the word of God.

And how do we determine what is the word of God and what is not? By God's exegete, Jesus Christ. When something in the Bible is contrary to the spirit of Christ or does nothing for us in terms of enlightening us about God and his will for us and is thus wholly irrelevant to our lives, then it cannot be the word of God to us. I find this to be the case with one entire book of the Bible, Zephaniah, a book that says next to nothing to me. The difference between that book and, say, Malachi or Hosea or even Habukkuk, to name other minor prophets, in terms of relevance is staggering. But still Zephaniah is Scripture, and if I can bring myself to keep reading it may one day be the word of God to me. We must realize that some Scripture may have been meaningful to the ones to whom it was addressed but not meaningful to us. This must be the case with many of the symbols in the book of Revelation, which leave most modern readers lost in the fog. But to be sure, to refer to our basic rule once more, the Apocalypse of St. John exudes with the spirit of Christ.

Our basic rule of interpretation also applies ethically, causing us sometime to say, "He should not have said that," even when it is in the Bible. I do not think, for instance, that Paul should have ever written what he wrote in Gal. 5:12, a passage that may slip by us in its offensiveness since translators are reluctant to render it as it should be. While the KJV says no more than "I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!," the *Good News* gets closer with "I wish that the people who are upsetting you would go all the way; let them go on and castrate themselves." Or in his anger he may be urging them to cut off their male organ if they are so gung-ho on using the knife. While Barclay defends such language on the ground that Paul may have had some pagan temple priests in mind who castrated themselves, we can justly criticize the apostle for going too far in this instance, for every Biblical writer must be judged by the spirit of Christ.

If it is argued that Jesus himself called some folk such names as "Fools and blind" and "Serpents, brood of vipers," it is enough to say that his doing so made it right for him when it might not be right for us. He knew men's hearts while we do not, and he had no such sin while we do. What really matters is when those same people nailed him to the cross, he prayed for their forgiveness and did not lash out against them.

The rule of the spirit of Christ must control all of our interpretation of Scripture. However logical our conclusions from Scripture about divorce and remarriage may appear to be, they must be held suspect if they cause us to treat the divorced contrary to the spirit of Christ. The eminent Christian apologist, C. S. Lewis, fell in love with a woman late in life in what was a beautiful love story, but since she was a divorcee his Episcopal priest would not marry them. When Lewis explained that she had been bruised and battered by her husband and was driven to divorce, the priest was unrelenting, saying, "You know what the Bishop would say, she is still a divorced woman." Never mind about how many

proof-texts may be quoted, when the church makes unbending laws that run contrary not only to the spirit of Christ but good common sense as well, we can question those laws. The spirit of Christ transcends law! Lewis at last found a priest that believed that and he married the woman he loved.

And so we are to judge people (if we must judge!) in terms of the spirit of Christ. When we see the spirit of Christ in the likes of Mother Teresa, we are to thank God and acknowledge that that is what it is all about, despite doctrinal errors such people may sincerely believe. What is crucial is that we be right about what matters most, and that is being right about Jesus. When we see Christ in people who may not go to church as often as we do and not even the "right" church when they do go, we should sit at their feet and learn what it really means to be a Christian.

This basic outlook should guide us in our reading of the Bible, which should be devotional instead of critical. We should read the Bible so as to see Christ in truth and beauty. He is what the Bible is all about, "the wonderful Person of the Bible," as he may be referred to. We do not have to bother with questions about miracles, science and the Bible, or with what certain difficult passages may mean. The Old Testament leads us to Christ, the New Testament introduces us to Christ. And let us not sin against the mystery of this Person, for he is more than we can ever comprehend. The Bible cannot even begin to contain him and it can barely reveal him. But if we read devotionally and if our desire is to see Jesus, we will get a glimpse of him who is nothing less than the Lord of glory.

So if the first rule of interpretation is ours, we may need no other. Jesus Christ, who is the exegete of God, is also the exegete of Scripture. All Scripture and all our interpretations must be brought to the judgment bar of the spirit of Christ. --*the Editor*

All the distinctive features and superiority of our republican institutions are derived from the teachings of Scripture. --*Edward Everett*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

MUST WE GIVE UP OUR OPINIONS FOR THE SAKE OF UNITY?

Men cannot give up their opinions, and, therefore, they never can unite, says one. We do not ask them to give up their opinions. We ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinions; but let them hold them as private property. --Alexander Campbell, *Mill. Harb*., 1830, p. 145.

Here we have the essence of "the Plea" as urged upon the church of the 19th century by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. Believers can unite upon the facts of the gospel. Opinions, theories, deductions can be held as private property and are not to be imposed upon others. The church is to unite upon the general truths of the Christian faith and allow opinions as a matter of liberty. Their plea gave rise to an old motto: *In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty, in all things, love.* The motto was also expressed as "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." That is one way of saying that an opinion is non-essential even if deemed important.

Campbell particularly objected to the practice of excommunicating one or withdrawing fellowship from one because of a wrong opinion or for simply being mistaken. As he put it, "It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect," and "I never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or, in other words, because he could not assent to my opinions."

To Campbell this is what made sects, *making opinions a test of fellowship.* And this is why his reformation efforts could not be accused of being sectarian. He issued this challenge: "I will now show you how they cannot make a sect of us. We will acknowledge all as Christians who acknowledge the gospel facts, and obey Jesus Christ." This is clearly a broader view of fellowship than is held by many who profess to be a part of the Movement launched by Alexander Campbell.

Such a liberal view invites the question of how far one will go in accepting other believers. We often hear "He will fellowship anybody and everybody," which, if true, is an understandable complaint since Christian fellowship certainly has its limits. When Campbell was asked if he would fellowship a Unitarian, he responded: "What is a Unitarian? One who contends that Jesus Christ is *not* the Son of God. Such a one has denied the faith, and therefore we reject him." And yet Campbell conceded that he would accept even a Unitarian if he will ascribe to Jesus all that the Bible ascribes to him.

So with a Trinitarian, Campbell went on to say, "If he will dogmatize and become a factionist, we reject him--not because of his opinions, but because of his attempting to make a faction, or to lord it over God's heritage. "

Universalism was a controversial issue in those days, and Campbell explained that his people would even accept a Universalist, on one important condition:

> And will you receive a Universalist too? No; not as a Universalist. If a man, professing Universalist opinions, should apply for admission, we will receive him, if he will consent to use and apply all the Bible phrases in their plain reference to the future state of men and angels. We will not hearken to those

> questions which gender strife, nor discuss them at all. If a person say such is his private opinion, let him have it as his private opinion; but lay no stress upon it; and if it be a wrong private opinion, it will die a natural death much sooner than if you attempt to kill it. (*Mill. Harb*., 1830, p. 147)

In the same essay Campbell refers to the case of Aylette Rains, who became a preacher in the Movement while he still held Universalist opinions. When some of the leaders wanted to excommunicate Rains for said opinions, both Thomas and Alexander Campbell stood up for him, contending that he should not be rejected for an opinion *per se*. This is how Campbell described it some years later:

> Some of us made a proposition that if these peculiar opinions were held as *private* opinions, and not taught by this brother, he might be, and, constitutionally, ought to be retained; but if he should teach or inculcate such private opinions, or seek to make disciples to them, he would then become a factionist, and as such could not be fellowshipped.

Campbell's prediction that an opinion left alone would die on its own proved true in Rain's case. Years later Rains, after decades of preaching on the frontier, acknowledged to Campbell that he hardly recalled what his opinions were in those earlier years, and he thanked him and his father for saving his ministry at a time when it might have been destroyed. And how often have we destroyed men for their opinions when it was so unnecessary!

One will notice that Campbell here makes a clear-cut distinction between heresy and an error and between a factionist and one with a mistaken view. One who holds a doctrinal error is not a factionist, but one who is pushy and seeks to gain disciples for his view. Heresy is not simply being honestly mistaken on a matter of doctrine, but the evil effort to create division within the Body of Christ. This means that Campbell would never brand something like premillennialism a heresy, though he would insist that a premillennialist (or one with any other millennial view) is not to try to build a party. If he does, he is a factionist, whether right or wrong in doctrine. Heresy is therefore a behavioral problem more than a doctrinal problem.

The principle of "In opinions, liberty" allows for the diversity that is certain to be present in any free society. People can no more see every point eye-to-eye than they can warp and twist every muscle and sinew so as to look alike. If men are left free, it is certain that they will differ, which is at it should be since we grow in an environment of vigorous differences. And so unity by its very nature is oneness amidst diversity. A family is a good example of how this works, for its members can be of one heart and one soul despite

differences in age, experience, sex, ability, and hangups. Unity always has a cohesiveness that holds the diverse elements together. Some suppose that even among thieves, when they are united, there is honor. Whether in the home or the church, the cohesiveness is love and mutual respect. Paul names it in Col. 3:14: "Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

That love is the bond that holds together that which would otherwise be divided is evident from what the apostle said in earlier verses of that chapter. "Bearing with one another," he says in verse 13, "and forgiving one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." That little *as* is powerful in that it reveals that we are to show the forbearance and love to each other that Jesus showed us. Such instruction implies that there will be differences. If we must agree on everything and be carbon copies of each other, there is nothing to forbear.

One problem with all this is that we cannot seem to agree on what is a matter of faith and what is a matter of opinion. And so some make the practice of a Sunday School or the use of instrumental music a matter of faith, while to others these are matters of opinion. It may help if we distinguish between faith (a scruple) and *the* faith, which is the gospel itself. The Scriptures make this distinction, such as in Rom. 14:22: "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God." Here faith is referred to as an opinion or scruple, such as regarding dietary practices or observing of holy days. This is not the same faith that refers to the basics of the Christian religion, such as Gal. 3:25: "But after (the) faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor," and Jude 3: "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." This distinction is a difference between essentials and non-essentials. This is why Paul would tell one with a scruple about meats, "Have your faith (opinion) to yourself before God," for while he must follow his conscience and abide by his "faith," it is not something essential (*the* faith) that is to be imposed on those who have no such scruple.

Or we can distinguish between faith and opinion this way: *faith is limited to what the Scriptures actually say, while opinion is what one supposes it means by what it says.* We can all agree, for instance, that Jesus said, "Thy kingdom come," but we may have different opinions as to what he meant by this. Or we can say that faith is based upon facts, particularly the facts of the gospel, while opinion is a theory about what said facts might imply, or a theology drawn from them. Faith is based on testimony, while an opinion is a deduction drawn from that testimony. We can all agree that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (testimony), but we may differ as to what theological systems, called Christology, can be erected upon that testimony. The facts about Christ are essential, the theories about him are not.

This is why theories about the millennium or speaking in tongues or the inspiration of Scripture, or such methods as missionary societies or instrumental music are only matters of opinion and not matters of faith. Where the Bible does not speak plainly there can be no faith. And so "In opinions, liberty" means that amillennial and premillennial churches can be united to the glory of God despite their diverse views. So with charismatic and non-charismatic, instrumental and acappella. We can all have our opinions and preferences so long as we do not impose them upon others as matters of faith. This is the only way unity will ever be possible. --*the Editor*

DO WE BELIEVE ONLY WHAT WE WANT TO BELIEVE?
(And don't bother us with the facts!)

Dean Henry Rosovsky has a provocative essay in the current *Harvard Magazine* on "Deaning," which is drawn from his long years as a dean at Harvard. His eight "Helpful Hints" for college administrators seem appropriate for one in most any walk of life, certainly such hints as "Never be surprised by anything." Preachers and editors might be wiser if they accepted the dean's suggestion of "Learn the value of being vague." And most parents would profit from his admonition to learn the meaning of *responsive,* which he dubs one of the most misused words of the American English language. He insists that one is just as "responsive" when he says *No* as when he says *Yes.*

But the hint from the dean that most impresses me is "Never underestimate the difficulty of changing false beliefs by facts." He presses his point with *People believe what they wish, and empirical evidence does not lead to quick altering of cherished positions*. He points to the commonly held view that Harvard senior professors give most all their time to research and graduate courses and therefore have no time for undergraduates. The fact is, the dean notes, that 90% of the Harvard senior faculty teach at least one undergraduate course. But this fact in no wise weakens the firmly held view to the contrary, the dean laments. He also observes that classes at Harvard are smaller today than they were twenty years ago, but this fact does not diminish the conviction of many alumni that Harvard was more intimate when they were in college, ten years ago or fifty years ago, it matters not.

It does not matter all that much, of course, what the alumni or the general public believes about routine matters at Harvard, but it is enormously important for us to realize, if indeed it be true, that we human beings are generally resistant to a change of mind even in the face of hard facts. False beliefs can do us in, whether they concern ourselves, our

world, our friends or our enemies, and if we are impervious to the truth we are in real trouble. The dean accepts this judgment with resigned fatalism: "I cite it as one of the unavoidable difficulties of our existence."

The dean, of course, would be the first to concede that there are many exemplary exceptions to what may be generally true. The hard, sometimes painful, facts have changed the lives of many worthies who in turn changed their world. There is Albert Schweitzer who, while preparing a lecture in philosophy paused to take in hand a missionary journal from Paris and read a report on "The Needs of the Congo Mission." That night he wrote in his diary, "My search is over." Even though he was a doctor of music and theology as well as medicine, he resolved to spend his life among the deprived of Africa. Cruel facts about needs in Africa changed his life.

Something like that can happen only to a person with an open mind. But it is more than that, for it involves a passion for truth and a diligent search for reality. Such ones are the truly free spirits in our world, free both of the fear of the censure of men and of their self-deprivations. Jesus of Nazareth spoke of such freedom when he said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Those who love freedom like that would never say, "Don't bother me with the facts."

We all love George Washington Carver for a spirit like that. Like Schweitzer, he too was searching, but in a different way. When southern blacks had lots of peanuts but no market for them, Carver made his way into the woods one day, planted his knees on the ground and prayed to the God of heaven for enlightenment. Holding a lowly peanut up to the God who created it, he prayed, "O God, help me to find out what is in this peanut!" He returned to his crude laboratory at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and went to work on the peanut. In a few years scores of products were made from peanuts. Carver stands in history as a testimonial that there are at least some people who not only accept facts when they are presented to them but who will pursue facts as one might search for a hidden treasure.

One of my favorite Bible characters is that little fellow named Zachaeus who climbed into a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. He was no kid out to see what was going on. He was a man of both eminence and wealth, being a chief tax collector. Luke 19:3 provides this elegant description: "He sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way."

He was a man who seemed willing to be disturbed by the truth. He both *ran* and *climbed* in his search, which must have been some sight for a populace that held tax collectors in derision. Luke continues the amazing story with: "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zachaeus, make haste and come down, for today

I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully." The scene was not lost on the crowd, which criticized Jesus for going to the home of a "sinner." Jesus' answer to that was that he had not come to make the "righteous" whole but "sinners."

Zachaeus had been an exacting if not an unjust business man, but the presence of Jesus changed that, leading him to some self-imposed penance. There is no indication that Jesus "preached" to him or got on his case. Zachaeus, now in the presence of something real, resolved to give half of his wealth to the poor and make all wrongs right with fourfold restitution. Jesus was able to impact his life like that only because Zachaeus was a man who was willing to face the facts, however painful.

A German philosopher, a black scientist, a Jewish tax collector. An unlikely threesome perhaps, but they serve to show that while the news is bad in regard to human instincts, it is not as bad as Dean Rosovsky's experience would suggest. And there is more to it than that Schweitzer, Carver, and Zachaeus never attended Harvard, albeit Schweitzer did visit the place on at least one occasion, even while I was a student there. He came to play the organ!

I want to believe that there is a hunger and thirst for something better in all of us, however latent it may be. Our great need, whether personal national or international, is openness. Only openness of spirit will roll back the Iron Curtain and remove the Berlin Wall. Only openness of spirit will heal broken homes and broken lives. When we are willing to read and listen as Schweitzer did, pray for light as Carver did, and run and climb in search of the authentic as Zachaeus did, then our lives will change as theirs changed. And we in turn will help change our world And that is all any of us can do, change our world by changing ourselves.

It all begins by getting our "want to" fixed. --*the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

HOW THE JAPANESE CAN HELP OUR CHURCHES

It is an unlikely subject, the Japanese helping our churches, but I am assuming that people that have done so much for themselves can do something for others.

If we go back forty years we find a small country (Japan would fit easily into the state of California) so devastated by war that there was hardly any hope that it could ever recover. Today Japan is not only the industrial leader of the orient but one of the great technological empires of the world. She tops all other nations in some impressive

categories: highest percentage of literacy, lowest infant mortality rate, the longest average life span, the highest educational level among youth. Japan also has one of the lowest violent crime rates among the nations. An American missionary in Tokyo, who has chosen to rear his children in that city, told me that he feels much safer in Japan than in his homeland.

I am impressed with the wisdom of our own statesman, Benjamin Franklin, who insisted that anybody could be well-to-do if he would practice two virtues, industry and frugality. Franklin would likely name these as the cause for Japan's "building greatness out of ashes." The average Japanese saves 20% of his income, which is triple that of Americans. They call such money "discretionary" income while we call it "disposable" income. We spend ours and they save theirs!

An example of their genius and industry is their luxury bullet trains which zip all over the country at well over 100 miles an hour. When I was in Japan a native was telling me about these trains and noted that they knew how to make the trains go much faster, up to 200 or more miles an hour. The only problem, he observed, was that they do not yet know how to stop them when they go that fast!

But I have none of these things in mind when I suggest that the Japanese might help us in the Church of Christ as well as other American denominations. It is rather what the Japanese call *nemawashi*, the meaning of which is illustrated in wrapping the roots of a tree together before moving it. Some Americans have defined it as "circular agreement." It describes the common practice of Japanese business to make no decision except by circular agreement. No action is taken until there is agreement throughout the company. This may slow things down for a time and even be frustrating, but it has the effect of all the team pulling together with minimum dissatisfaction.

This means that the Japanese in their long cultural history have learned to talk and listen to each other. It is common for a Japanese company to solve its problems and plan its work in group discussions with input from diverse levels within the company. This has proven so effective that some American companies have begun to use it in an effort to increase their own efficiency.

The main reason why Churches of Christ today face a crisis in matters of polity (elder-minister-congregation relationships), a crisis that involves us in a score of legal confrontations, is a lack of *nemawashi*. In our hurried, careless way we move the tree and be done with it, scattering roots and soil along the way. We do not listen to one another. We do not seek "circular agreement" when action is to be taken. Our "corporate executives" in the form of the *eldership*, a concept that may well be foreign to the Scriptures, act on their own, consulting only with each other. They may ask the members to pay the freight but

they do not ask them what they think. They do not seek general agreement. Our usual practice along this line is so one-sided that the members know nothing about what "they" are going to do until it is announced from the pulpit or published in the bulletin. In our churches the left hand does not know what the right hand does. This even includes the hiring and firing of the preacher. The members may hear rumors, but they usually know nothing until the elders announce it.

And so we are surely the most "they"-oriented denomination in the country. We talk about what "they" decide and what "they" do, meaning of course the elders with perhaps the preacher sitting in "ex officio" on the meetings. In those cases where the preacher really runs things to the relief or the frustration of the elders, it is rare that there is any substantial communication with the members. We are not sufficiently a "We" people.

If the Japanese have turned ashes into a great nation by consulting with each other at every level of operation and thus moving ahead as one, then our churches may recover their authenticity as part of the Body of Christ by "the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4: 16).

A passage of Scripture that points up the virtue of *nemawashi* is in Malachi 3. Amidst the ashes of apathy, indifference, and rebellion on the part of God's people the prophet pointed to the reason for hope of better things to come: "Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and meditate on His name" (Mal. 3:16).

God always has his faithful remnant. In this case that remnant got together and talked things out. They prayed together and shared their faith. It might be seen as "circular agreement. " The Lord listened. What comforting words! When we talk it over together and struggle for some solution, the Lord is there listening in and blessing us. He even takes notes! The "book of remembrance" is the prophet's way of assuring the people that God is with them and that he will remember their faithfulness. Surely from this we can conclude that *if God listens to us then we ought to listen to one another*.

When our elders and preachers behave more like listening shepherds and less like dictating executives, we will no longer have a crisis in communication and consequently a crisis in polity. --*the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

I SAW JESUS' PRAYER FOR UNITY ANSWERED

Edward Fudge

Damp fog shrouds the gun-towers as we get out of the car. It is early in the morning on the first day of the week, November 30, 1986. Before us, sepulchre-like in the grayness, looms the Eastham Unit, Texas Department of Corrections. This is the place *Newsweek* recently called "America's Toughest Prison."

The steel gate opens in response to a guard's electronic command and we walk through. Then, like some heavy stone rolled against the door, the gate swings shut behind us, its metallic clang breaking the pre-dawn stillness. Passing through a front building, we wind our way through succession of checkpoints and bars into the prison's deeper belly.

Over one door a sign announces: "Through this door enter Texas' finest prison personnel." I see the words, but my thoughts go to others by Dante: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." Apart from Jesus Christ, these words would be equally appropriate. But Jesus Christ does make the difference, as we will see over the next few hours, and he is the reason we are all here this morning.

When the *Newsweek* story came out, I remembered long-time friend Vance Drum, now Protestant chaplain at Eastham prison. I recalled how Vance had told with great excitement of changed lives inside this formidable place. I remembered his holy smile, that pushed his mustache toward both ears and lit his eyes like sparkling stars, as he described the church inside this prison. A church with elders and deacons, no less, made up of convicted rapists, murderers and armed robbers.

There is another story here, I thought, as I read *Newsweek*. My friend Randy Frame, news writer at *Christianity Today*, agreed. So Vance and I prepared an interview. Joel Andrews, a Christian photographer from Palestine, drove over to do his thing, and, in early November, *Christianity Today* reported the story *Newsweek* had not. "God is Also 'Inside America's Toughest Prison.'" The same One who sees into Sheol also moves easily inside Eastham. Now it would be my privilege to observe it first-hand.

It is now approaching 9:00 a.m. Sunday school is over and we are gathered in the Chapel of Hope. Vance's Sunday morning service borrows the best of forms from across the Christian spectrum. We begin with invigorating praise choruses--"Pentecostal," if you please. I am moved deeply as hardened criminals, now softened by the gentle hand of heaven, pour out their hearts in the expressive words and music. Vance leads the Chaplain's Prayer--to the point and without flowery rhetoric. Hispanic, Black and Anglo "amens" punctuate the prayer as it progresses, and affirm it heartily at its end.

Traditional hymns follow--then several selections from the largely Black choir. This "jubilee" music tells the way things really are: sinking sinners, a rescuing Savior, hearts set free and filled with hope. Even inside these walls of concrete and steel and fences topped with razor-wire.

Vance has graciously invited me to give a message from the Scriptures, and I talk concerning the prayer Jesus gave as a model for disciples in Matthew 6. The 100-150 men present are attentive as we think together about the heavenly father and the kind of father he is. We reflect on the blessings we enjoy today in his kingdom, by his power and to his glory: daily bread, forgiveness of sins, deliverance from evil. And we anticipate the ultimate fulfilment of this prayer in that time when on earth, just as in heaven, God's name will be perfectly hallowed, his kingdom fully come, his will always done.

This is a special day for Vance for still another reason. He is to be ordained this afternoon into the ministry of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), having preached previously for Churches of Christ. Because the prison elders obviously cannot attend that service, Vance asks them to participate now in advance. They gather around their chaplain and lay hands on him--black hands, white hands, brown hands--lifting fervent prayers to the one God and Father of all, that he will fill Vance afresh with his Holy Spirit and empower him for the particular needs of his unique ministry. The prison service climaxes, like those in the earliest Church with the Communion.

I find myself thinking that this place cannot be as bad as I had read, judging from the peace and joy which illuminates these faces. When we leave the chapel later, however, and pass other faces in the corridors--faces that are hopeless, bitter and empty--I realize that it *is* that bad, and worse. *Jesus* makes all the difference. By the time we leave the prison, the sun is shining and the fog is gone. Indeed, the Sun of Righteousness has risen, with healing in his wings!

Vance's ordination service included the reading of Scripture and special music by brothers and sisters from the Baptist, Bible and Episcopal churches, and a Black minister from the Church of God in Christ. At the laying on of hands, Vance kneels, and the elders of the host congregation, the First Christian Church of Crockett, surround him. The presiding minister then invites the elders and clergy of other denominations present to join the circle. "We believe in the oneness of Christ's Church," he says. Though a small assembly, it is representative of the Christians in this small east Texas town. Along with Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Bible, Episcopal and Catholic representatives, I am thrilled to join the circle as an elder in a Church of Christ. I bring to Vance's continuing

ministry the prayers and best wishes of all those of his former association who see this as a continuing step in his pilgrimage to heaven, rather than as a mark of his final departure from the faith.

We repeat together the symbol of our common faith, the Apostles Creed. "I believe in one holy, catholic church." Or, as Thomas Campbell would put it, "The Church of Christ is essentially and constitutionally one." I have no doubt that Jesus takes pleasure in this as well. "That they all may be one," he had prayed. We are making slow progress--not by organizational amalgamation but by individual recognition of other members of the one family which is in heaven and on earth. We still have much to learn. But there is also much for which we can give thanks.

Now we take the Communion--again a visible symbol of the one, universal Body of Christ. It is a glorious day. I have seen Jesus' prayer for unity answered today. It was beautiful to behold. --*Box 218026, Houston, TX 77218.*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

OUR CHANGING WORLD

Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston announces a conference on "Fellowship through Service" for April 10-11. This is a continuation of the series begun two years ago by the Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas, intended especially for those among us who are in search of a freer and more open fellowship Participants will be Reuel Lemmons, Don Finto, Gene Shelburne, Robert Fife, Joe Hightower, Virgil Frye, Jim Whitehead, Carol Johnson, Bob Gutleben, Vance Drum, Wes Whit, and J. Harold Thomas. Subjects include how to stop disfellowshipping, worship renewal, service among the sick and the imprisoned, and healing. It begins Friday evening and ends Saturday afternoon. There will be a limited number of private accommodations. Write to the church at 1910 Bering Dr., Houston, TX 77057, or call 713-783-2340 for further information.

After extensive litigation, an Arkansas judge has ordered the elders of the Sixth and Izard Church of Christ in Little Rock to open its books to any of the members who wish to see them. While this is a court victory for the plaintiffs who have long sought such a ruling (which was made earlier but reversed by the state's supreme court on a technicality), Bob Scott, speaking for the plaintiffs, said, "I don't feel like I won anything. This is not a situation where anybody wins. It's a major loss for everyone." The judge thought likewise, for he told both sides that it is a tragedy when members of the same church cannot settle their disputes without court action. "The only thing more heart-rending than this case is a

divorced couple with formative age children involved." The plaintiffs suspect that the elders will appeal the decision all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court before they will open their financial records to inspection by the congregation. The elders testified in court that they and not the members are to select other elders and that only they can remove a sitting elder.

Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis is hosting a "Christians Only but Not the Only Christians" conference March 29-April 1. It is billed as a "Reappraisal of Disciples Tradition in the 21st Century." Leading Disciples, including the church's president, is on the program, and there will be both plenary sessions and working groups on such issues as worship, ministry, authority, evangelism, and church life. For further information contact Dr. Michael Kinnamon at 317-924-1331.

On a recent Sunday I addressed a rather new congregation that meets in homes in the back country near Paradise, Texas, an hour or so from our home. Ouida had to stay with her mother. They call themselves "The Church of the Living God" and are mostly from Church of Christ families, several being from the non-Sunday School persuasion. They showed the one sure sign of being liberated: the freedom with which they discuss the Scriptures. Meeting in homes as they do they can better do Body ministry. They break the Loaf each Lord's day and are acappella. But that name! They'll never make Abilene's mailing list with a name like that. They are planning a building, which may not be a good idea. At least they are not mad at anybody and did not walk out of any church. A few started meeting and they are growing, and without a professional minister. For my more orthodox readers: are they a Church of Christ?

I recently conducted the funeral for an 87-year old woman whom I had visited in the hospital, the mother of a sister in our congregation. Divorced early in life, she was left to rear three children by herself, which she did devotedly. Her only son was in "the Lost Battalion" on Java and died in a POW camp in the jungles of Thailand when only 21. Her son returned from the war in a box and his mother received a folded flag. It underscores the triumphant truth that "He will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there will be no more heartache." Since she both lived alone and died alone, I thought it appropriate to say a word on Paul's elegant line "No one lives to himself and no one dies to himself, for if we live we live to the Lord, and if we die we die to the Lord."

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

READER'S EXCHANGE

We know members of the Church of the Brethren who during a serious illness called for the anointing of oil and prayers as taught in Jas. 5:14. The pastor and his wife performed the anointing, but someone upset them by insisting that it wasn't valid because elders is in the plural. I studied the passage in several translations and commentaries and it does seem to indicate two or more elders, but I find it hard to believe that what they did was contrary to God's word. --*Evan W. Price, Astoria, IL.*

(This is an example of how some well-meaning people would turn the Bible into a legal code. Jesus has delivered us from such legalistic exactitude. If a sick believer in view of the promise in Jas, 5:14 calls for the elders of the church and but one elder comes, we can only conclude that the spirit of the Scripture is honored and that God will bless such faith. It isn't the number of elders that gives it meaning but the faith of those involved. --*Ed*.)

The article on women and children in the November issue was exceptionally timely. I feel no need to be "liberated." The Lord did that for me. Though they may be rare, there are men who believe in the Golden Rule and so they treat women as Jesus taught. So, there's no problem if we will treat others as we would have them treat us. So with children. If children were treated from birth according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount there would be no mental or emotional problems, except in the case of brain damage. Think what it would mean to a child to be treated always by adults the way those adults themselves would like to be treated! What child is never called "Thou fool" by its own parents? --*Rose Temple, Wallawa, OR.*

Let me ask you to comment on Phil. 4:2-3. There may be more here than we have allowed. Paul says "these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, *along with Clement* and the rest of my fellow workers . . ." Were these women merely teachers of women and children? Did they chair some committee? Did they just do such chores as washing dishes, fixing meals, and the jobs usually expected of women? Or did they actually *contend* at Paul's side "in the cause of the gospel" just like Clement, a man? I am not trying to "free up" women from any God-ordained restrictions, but I do want to know what the will of the Lord is and follow it. --*Charles Holt, editor, The Examiner, Box 21584, Chattanooga, TN 37421.*

(This kind of courageous thinking gives you an idea of what you will find in Charles' new journal, *The Examiner*. He will add your name to his mailing list for the asking. As for the women who labored at Paul's side, there can be no question but that it was gospel work. But this would not have to mean that they too were evangelists or public proclaimers of the word. Most gospel work, whether by men or women, is of the quieter sort, anyway, isn't it? --*Ed*.)

Your publication preserved me through my Bible College years! I am now pastoring with an excellent staff at a Church of Christ (Christian). --*Barry Tucker, Florence, KY.*

It is so good to be free in the Lord! We belong to a Church of Christ group on the fringe that is accepted only by a couple of congregations in the area. We have love, peace, and harmony even though we do not see eye-to-eye on everything. --*Richard Kruse, Toronto, Ontario, CN.*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

BOOK NOTES

If you would like to expose yourself to such philosophical concepts as existentialism, positivism, metaphysics in a way that you can grasp, we recommend Walter Kaufmann's *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*. Such chapters as "Can One Prove God's Existence?" and "Dialogue Between a Christian and Satan" will stir your grey matter. $6.50 postpaid.

The best Bible dictionary is *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible,* which has about everything, "A Goldmine of Information. " The *Christian Herald* calls it. Over 60 maps, 450 illustrations, rich in archaeology, readable information; it is more of a library than merely one book. $19.95 postpaid

And the best work on Paul may well be F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, which is both historical and theological, which means he both traces Paul's missionary journeys and tells you what he believed about baptism, the Lord's Supper, sin, etc. A great study of over 500 pages. $21.50 postpaid.

Our newer readers might like to see what we have said in years past, so we will send 18 back issues, selected at random, for only $3.00 postpaid, which is a super bargain.

We continue our special price of only $35.00 for all five bound volumes of this journal, which includes all the numbers from 1977-1984. These are matching volumes, hardbound, beautiful binding. Regular price is $42.50.

People's New Testament Notes by B. W. Johnson is an oldtime favorite, which we can supply at $15.00 for the two-volume set, or $7.50 per volume, postpaid.

The Gospel Restored by Walter Scott is back in print. $14.95 postpaid.

With this issue we begin our 35th year of publication, 28 of those years under the name of *Restoration Review*. With this issue we begin a new series on "The Sense of Scripture," which will continue for two years.

The past *two* years of this journal, which treated the theme "Adventures of the Early Church," should be in book form by late spring. It will match our other bound volumes, five of which are still in print and are available for $35 for all five volumes.

While *The Stone-Campbell Movement* is temporarily out of print, we will send you a bonus copy as soon as it is *again* in print when you send us eight subs to this journal, new or renewals, including your own, at $3.00 per name ($24.00), but you must request the book with your order.

You may subscribe to this journal at the club rate of $3.00 per name with four or more names (minimum $12.00*).* Otherwise the sub rate is $5.00 per annum or two years for $8.00.

RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas. Second class postage paid at Denton, Texas. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $5.00 a year, or two years for $8.00; in clubs of four or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $3.00 per name per year. (USPS 044450). POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201.